

Queens Civic Congress and Queens Coalition for Parks and Green Spaces welcome Comptroller Thompson's intervention to preserve the Ridgewood Reservoir as a natural green space. Read the Comptroller's [statement](#) and [letter](#). Read our "Green" [statement](#). We note the discussions at a "local" level indicate movement away from inappropriate development for a natural area and toward preservation of Ridgewood Reservoir and appropriate access while enhancing adjoining Highland Park and its recreation capacities. If only the Parks Commissioner can clearly commit (a letter to the Comptroller and our Borough President would work) that any funding for Reservoir project would involve only preservation and appropriate public access..... Commissioner, find the ball in your court.

[http://www.nydailynews.com/ny\\_local/queens/2008/06/25/2008-06-25\\_controller\\_balks\\_at\\_reservoir\\_site\\_desig.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/queens/2008/06/25/2008-06-25_controller_balks_at_reservoir_site_desig.html)

**DAILY NEWS** |

## Controller balks at reservoir site design

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The city's plan to redevelop the Ridgewood Reservoir suffered a setback this week when city [Controller William Thompson](#) rejected a Parks Department contract to design the site.

The agency should not have awarded the \$3.3 million contract without "a full understanding of all the issues pertaining to any new development" of the environmentally sensitive area, according to a June 23 letter from the controller's office to the Parks Department.

In addition, having an architect selected by the agency also oversee an environmental assessment of the site could be a conflict of interest, the letter states.

[Geoffrey Croft](#) of [New York City](#) Park Advocates, who believes the reservoir area should remain untouched, said Thompson is doing the right thing by "nipping the contract in the bud."

"Unfortunately, once you pay a designer it's often hard to undo plans in the Parks Department world," said Croft.

Four years ago, the city Department of Environmental Protection turned over the 50-acre, defunct reservoir site - located next to [Highland Park](#) at the [Brooklyn-Queens](#) border - to the Parks Department.

Parks officials are floating several plans to redevelop the area, currently filled with dense shrubs, trees and wetlands. Under one scenario, an old basin would be filled to create ballfields and other recreational facilities. The idea has some activists up in arms.

Thompson said that would require up to 1 million cubic yards of fill being trucked in through local streets, causing years of noise, pollution and traffic woes.

Parks officials have said they will weigh community concerns before finalizing designs.

"We plan to review the controller's concerns and meet with the controller so that the design contract and the planning can move ahead on this great park," a Parks Department statement said yesterday.

One of the key goals of PlaNYC, [Mayor Bloomberg's](#) sweeping environmental initiative, "is to ensure that every New Yorker lives within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space," the agency added. "Highland Park in Queens is one of eight large parks being redesigned to help achieve this goal."

The agency has also pointed out that local church leaders have been urging the city to provide more ballfields for children.

Thompson, who is eying a run for mayor next year, has been vocal in his concerns about the site.

Last month, he and environmentalist [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#) penned a column for [The New York Times](#) heralding the reservoir an "accidental wilderness" rarely seen in the five boroughs. Thompson and Kennedy said the city should instead spend the money on improving ballfields at Highland Park.

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With John Lauinger

[Earlier Queens Civic Congress posts on this topics:](#)

[2008-06-19 Thompson, Marshall Push to Keep Queens Reservoir Wild](#) (The Observer)

[2008-05-29 A Wilderness, Lost in the City](#) (New York Times)

Op-ed by City Comptroller William Thompson and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. supporting Queens Civic Congress on Ridgewood Reservoir

[2007-11-12 Joint Statement: Queens Civic Congress and Queens Coalition for Parks & Green Spaces](#)